Geological Survey of India indicate that the Mt. Kanchanzanga glacier in Sikkim is receding for last few decades. However, the rate of recession has been slower in recent times. The study also estimated an annual retreat of 4.15 meters during 1986-2005.

(c) Melting of glacier may increase the run-off the Himalayan Rivers initially but it may ultimately lead to some reduction of water availability in future.

(d) A National Action Plan on Climate Change was launched in June, 2008 which envisages the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Eco-system amongst its 8 national missions. This Mission would understand *inter-alia*, the phenomena relating to the recession of the Himalayan glaciers and the ways of addressing the problem.

A new research centre on Himalayan Glaciology has been established at Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun. Guidelines and best practices for the governance for sustaining Himalayan Eco-system has been developed and shared with all State Governments in the Himalayan Region.

Replacement of Mullaperiyar Dam

1100. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the backgrounds and consideration that have over weighed the Ministry to give clearance for Kerala Government for undertaking a fresh survey for constructing a new dam in the place of existing Mullaperiyar Dam when the issues of dispute are pending before the Supreme Court of India;

(b) the bigwigs and other Ministries consulted before giving the clearance; and

(c) whether the Minister formally or informally consulted Tamil Nadu Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife, which is chaired by the Hon'ble Minister, In-charge of Ministry of Environment and Forests, considers the proposals involving diversion of forest area in the Protection Areas (National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries etc.) received from the State/UT Governments in the prescribed format. The proposal of Mullaperiyar dam was submitted by the State Government of Kerala in prescribed format seeking permission for carrying out survey and investigation. After detailed discussion and considering the fact that the old dam was 113 years old, weak and could cause serious disaster in future, the Standing Committee unanimously recommended the proposal for survey and investigation subject to compliance of conditions envisaged by the Chief Wildlife Warden and without, in any way, affecting any other legal and administrative clearances required.

No information about the dispute with State of Tamil Nadu or any case in the matter pending before Hon'ble Supreme Court was mentioned in the proposal.

(b) The Committee followed the established procedure for taking decision on the matter.

(c) The proposals are processed on merits of the case and if any additional information is required to take a decision, the concerned State/UT Government is requested to provide the same.

Commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal

1101. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee has decided to permit commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal in the country;

(b) whether pro-farmer lobbies and activists argue that GM food will destroy all traditional crops and make farmers and consumers bonded slaves to giant agri-business combines;

(c) whether Government has considered, while clearing Bt brinjal cultivation in the country, the rational consequences and risks that GM crops/ foods present *viz*: allergic reactions, gene transfer and outcrossing; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in its meeting held on 14.10.2009 has recommended to the Government that Bt brinjal is safe for environmental release taking into consideration the findings of the review by three high level technical Committees. The decision of the GEAC on the safety of Bt brinjal for environmental release is based on scientific facts/data generated during 2002-2009 and international experience with genetically modified (GM) crops. The Ministry has received strong views both in favour and against commercialization of Bt brinjal in India from the various stakeholders including the State Governments, farmers, civil societies, NGOs and scientists. The involvement of public institutions such as Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad and Indian Institute of Vegetable Research, Varanasi in the development of Bt brinjal would ensure that cultivation of Bt brinjal is a viable proposition to the farmers. Further, the data generated on the safety, efficacy and performance of Bt brinjal concludes that Bt brinjal is expected to provide enhanced economic benefits to farmers accrued from higher marketable yield and lower usage of pesticide sprays. These findings are in conformity with the Bt cotton experience in India and international experience with GM crops.

(c) and (d) The Government of India is following a policy of case by case approval of GM crops. In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GM plant is approved for commercial cultivation. This includes generation of relevant biosafety information and its elaborate analysis to ensure food, feed and environmental safety. The